

DISSUASIVE

a From Enquiring into the
Doctrine of the Trinity:

OR, THE
DIFFICULTIES
AND
DISCOURAGEMENTS

Which attend the
Study of that Doctrine.

In a Letter to a Friend.

THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N.

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DISSUASIVE

From Enquiring into the
Doctrine of the Trinity, &c.

In a Letter to a Friend.

Worthy Sir,

I Find by your Letter, that you are highly dissatisfied with the Advice I lately gave you, *not to enquire too nicely and curiously into the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity*, but rather to rest contented with the *Orthodox Divinity*, in that Grand *Mystery* which the *Church*, saith Mr. Nelson, *is in possession of*. Tho' the *Civilians* should tell you, that *Possessor malæ fidei nullo unquam tempore præscribit*. For, says your Letter, 'shall not I be permitted fully to understand my Creed? Shall I, as oft as I publickly rehearse the *Athanasian Creed*, doom all to everlasting Perdition, who do not keep the *Catholick Faith* de-

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' liver'd in it, *whole and undefiled* ? Shall
 ' I, after so nice and full an Explication of
 ' that *Mystery*, say to my Congregation, *He*
 ' *therefore that will be saved, must thus think*
 ' *of the Trinity* ? and close the Rehearsal of
 ' it with these Words, *This is the Catholick*
 ' *Faith, which except a Man believe faith-*
 ' *fully, He cannot be saved* ; and not be able
 ' to prove what I say ? Would you perswade
 ' me to a thing impossible ? to wit, to be-
 ' lieve without Evidence, I know not what,
 ' and I not why ? or, must I not be able to
 ' *give a Reason of my Faith* ? How can I
 ' answer this to God, my Conscience, or
 ' my Parish ? How shall I be able to stop
 ' the Mouths of *Infidels* and *Anti-Trinitari-*
 ' *ans* ; to confute the new *Hereticks* sprung
 ' up among us, and to justify the Condem-
 ' nation pass'd upon them by our *Wise,*
 ' *Learned* and *Judicious Synod*, zealous for
 ' the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints at
 ' our blessed Reformation ? Or why do I
 ' call the Adversaries of it *Hereticks*, if I
 ' cannot prove them to be so ?

These, Sir, I confess are considerable
 Inducements to employ your utmost Dili-
 gence in this Search, did not the *unsur-*
mountable Difficulties of the Subject, and
 your Liableness to miscarry in, or to grow
 weary of the tedious Search, outweigh or
 counterpoise them. Consider thereore

1. The great Difficulty of the Work you go about ; of which the different Methods taken by the most able Managers of this Controversie, afford a strong Presumption. For why else do we find so many and so different *Schemes* proposed for Explication of this *Mystery*? Some saying with the learned Dr *Sherlock*, that the *Three Persons* are *Three Minds*. Others with Dr *South* and the *Oxford Decree*, condemning this as *Tritheism*. Some resembling the *Three Persons* to the Soul, and its Two Faculties, the Understanding and the Will ; as the ingenious Mr *Nye*. Some with the *Schoolmen*, saying the *Father* begot the *Son* by an *Act of his Mind*, and the *Holy Ghost* by an *Act of his Love*. Some allowing a *Subordination* of the *Son* and *Holy Spirit* to the *Father*, as the Reverend *Bishop Bull*. Others stiffly denying it, as Dr *John Edwards*. Some asserting an *internal Generation* and *Spiration* of the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, and an *interdependence* of the *Three Persons*. Others exploding this as unintelligible. Some making the *Son* and *Holy Ghost* receive their Being by the Communication of the individual Essence of the *Father* to them. Some with Dr *Cudworth*, saying that the Doctrine of the Church asserted only the same *Specifick Essence*. Others condemning the first as a Contradiction, and the second as *Tritheism*, and rather saying that they re-

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ceived their Being by an *Act* of his *Paternal Power*. Some allowing the Son and Holy Ghost to have *all the Essential Attributes* of the *Father*: Which seems best to accord with the Declaration of our *Liturgy* on *Trinity Sunday*, *that which we believe of the Glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any Difference or Inequality*. Others denying this, as conceiving they cannot have *Self-existence* and *Independency*. And will you not find it difficult enough to examine all these several *Schemes*, and to discern which of them you judge most reasonable to embrace, and which of them you shall think fit to reject?

Moreover, various are the Ways of managing this Dispute, and defending our selves against the Objections of the busie subtle *Hereticks*. Some shelter themselves under the Word *Mystery*; saying, when they are pinched, *This is a Mystery to be adored, not pryed into*. Others tell us, this is a Doctrine so far surpassing the Capacity of Humane Understanding, that we must by no means pass a Judgment on it by our own *weak and carnal Reason*, but must rather *capivate our Reason to the Obedience of Faith*. And both these in effect approve of my Advice, to rest in the *Publick Judgment of the Church*, and not to use your own *Private Judgment* at all; since God hath given

you no other Faculty besides this feeble Reason, whereby to judge of Truth and Falshood, or even of the true Sense of *Scripture*. Others say, you must be guided by the Sentiments of the *Primitive Fathers*, and by *Catholick Tradition* in this Case. And these Men send you into a Wilderness, in which you may wander all your Life long without coming to any Certainty. For you will find, if you search impartially, the *Primitive Fathers* far from agreeing among themselves, and farther from agreement with our present Sentiments and *Catholick Tradition*, invisible before the *Nicene Council*. And they who fly to this Expedient, do in effect declare, that you can have no assurance of this Doctrine from the *Holy Scripture*; which is, say other Protestants, their only Rule of Faith, and clear in all things necessary to be believed.

And since, according to the two first ways of managing this Controversie, the use of Reason, that is, of *Private Judgment*, is excluded, and by the third, your Search is endless; must it not be your Wisdom as well as Safety, to sit still, and rest in the received Doctrine of our *Orthodox Divines*?

2dly. The Difficulty will be much enhanced from the Consideration of the Work
you

you have to do: For there are several Books upon this Subject lying upon our Hands, yet unanswered, or at least never answered to satisfaction. Now, if you will impartially search into this Controversie, you must not only read carefully Dr *Pearson*, Dr *Whitby*, Dr *Jonathan Edwards*, and above all *Placæus* on our Side, but you must, with like Care, and without Prejudice, peruse the subtle Writers on the other Side; viz. *Crellius*, Mr *Emlyn*, Mr *Biddle*, &c. and then, if you be not in great danger of being perverted by them, and so run the hazard of the same hard Fate and heavy Censures they have undergone, I fear you will be much puzzled, and find it no easie matter to give a clear and satisfactory Answer to their cunning *Sophistry*. For were this easie to be done, why hath it been so long neglected? Why did the Clergy of *Ireland* think it more adviseable to fine and imprison, than to answer Mr *Emlyn*? or why did the great Mr *Lesley* so miserably fail in the Attempt? In Matters of so great Moment, the zealous and learned Members of the *Church of England* are not usually slow in answering what bears so hard upon them, when they are able to do it clearly, and with full satisfaction to the Reader. This Silence therefore, in a Matter of such Grand Importance,

portance, will be imputed by the *Scepticks* of this Age, and by the *Adversaries* of this Fundamental Doctrine, to the great Difficulty of the Subject. Will it not then be your Wisdom to leave this Task to be performed by the great Abilities and exquisite Learning of the *Archbishop* and *his Suffragans*, and of the *Prolocutor* and *his Lower-house*, rather than to commit this Grand Affair to the Enquiries of your own *Fallible, Private Judgment*, and run the Risque of being either confounded, or perverted by the Search; as I find too many are. Let then this Work alone, to be performed by more able Hands. For *Dr Clarke* being censured by the *August Assembly* of our Lower-House of *Convocation*, we doubtless shall receive from some of the *Reverend Persons* who compose that learned *Assembly*, a full and clear Confutation of all that He hath offered in Defense of his *Heretical* Doctrines; though as yet they have not been *at leisure* to perform that necessary Work. For unless this be done by the same Body which censured his Works, Men will be too apt to say they condemn'd what they were not *able* to confute, and to run into those Doctrines which they find condemn'd, but *never* answer'd. *Atheists* and *Anti-scripturists* will say, that *Orthodoxy* maintains the

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plainest Contradictions, so clearly prov'd against us, that we dare not attempt an Answer to the Accusation; and *Papists* will be ready to object, that though we deny the *Infallibility* of their *Church*, yet do we act as we were infallible, condemning merely by our own Authority, what we cannot answer or confute; and teach for *Doctrines*, yea for Fundamental Doctrines, the *Traditions of Men*.

My Advice to you therefore is, to hold fast the *Orthodox* Faith, and live in Expectation of a full, clear and ample Confutation of all the *Doctor* hath or can say against it. For Men of so great Zeal for the *Orthodox* Faith; so great Abilities both in the Knowledge of *Scripture* and *Antiquity* as they who censure him are; will not permit such erroneous and dangerous Assertions as He hath published, to pass without the fullest Confutation. For surely Men of so great Zeal for the *Orthodox* Faith, cannot want Will to do it. And therefore, should that *Judicious* and *Learned Body* appoint none of so many able Members to perform that Work, their Silence would be look'd upon as a Presumption that they could not do it; and so their Censure of the *Doctor* would do more Hurt than Good. For can a Christian hear with Patience the *Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* condemned, without

without the clearest Evidence that it is falsely called *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*? Or can that *August Assembly* tamely suffer *Forty Texts of Scripture*, in which the whole Substance of the Controversie is contain'd, to be so *miserably perverted* by the sinister Attempts of one Man, without shewing the World that they have been *perverted* by him?

Since therefore in a Case of this importance, it cannot reasonably be deem'd sufficient to cry out, *ὡς ταράττε*, you may rest assur'd that, in due time, you shall see the *Doctor's rash and dangerous Positions* (for so they are called) so fully baffled and exposed, and his pretended Arguments so clearly answer'd by those wiser Heads, that if his own *farther Searches* do not, the learned Discourses of this Great and Venerable Body cannot fail to *convince him* that He is mistaken in his present Notions; and then, as he promiseth, He will be obliged to *own it to the World*.

Till then this Work, so necessary and so much expected, see the Light, go on steadily in the way of *Orthodoxy*: Remove not the ancient Land-marks which your Fathers have set; that is, saith Melancthon, change not the Laws which Antiquity hath deliver'd by grave Authority, and, as the Preacher well adviseth, Eccles. 7, 16, make not thy
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self over-wise: why shouldest thou destroy thy self? Where, saith the Reverend Bishop *Patrick*, ‘ it is good Advice, in order
 ‘ to a safe and quiet Passage thro’ this Life,
 ‘ to be temperate in thy Zeal, and not to
 ‘ over-do, by correcting the inveterate Vices
 ‘ of others, or opposing the vulgar Opini-
 ‘ ons too severely and unseasonably, where-
 ‘ by they are only exasperated and enraged,
 ‘ but not at all amended. For why should
 ‘ a Man bring Mischief upon himself,
 ‘ without doing Good to others?

Consider, 3^{dly}, That in all other Cases which concern those Duties which we think necessary to be performed by our Flocks, we are diligent to explain to them the Reason and Necessity of them. For how many Commentaries have we upon the Ten Commandments? How many excellent Discourses of the Love of God, and of our Neighbour; of the Nature and the Necessity of Faith, Repentance, and sincere Obedience? And as to the *Apostles Creed*, into which we were all baptized, and which, saith our *Catechism*, contains *All the Articles of the Christian Faith*, (though it hath never yet been proved that it contains all the Articles delivered in the Creed of *Athanasius*,) how many excellent Expositions have we of it? All which attempt to prove every separate Article of it
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from the *Holy Scripture*. Because, as Bishop Pearson says, *whatever is delivered in the Creed, we therefore do believe, because it is contain'd in the Holy Scriptures*. But though we say in the Close of the *Athanasian Creed*, *This is the Catholick Faith, which except a Man believe faithfully, He cannot be saved*; and in our 8th. Article, that *this Creed may be proved by most firm Testimonies, or most certain Warrant from the Holy Scripture*; yet whoever used the like Diligence in explaining this *Creed* to their People? Or whoever attempted to prove every separate Branch, Article, or Sentence of it, from Texts of *Scripture* plainly asserting the same thing, or clapt those Texts to the Side of every Branch of it, which He conceived to be clearly and fully expressive of all that is asserted in that *Creed*? This sure cannot thus happen, because such an Explication and Confirmation of all these *Articles* is less needful, than is the Explication and Confirmation of the forementioned *Creed* or Duties. For what can be more necessary to be explained and cleared to the Understanding than that, without the Knowledge of which *we cannot be saved*, but, *without doubt, shall perish everlastingly*? And what cannot be sufficiently proved from plain *Scripture* Testimony, cannot be truly judged to be at all an Article of Christian Faith; nor
ought,

ought, saith our 6th Article, *to be required of any Man to be believed as an Article of Faith, or to be thought requisite or necessary to Salvation.* It must be then the difficulty of the Subject, and our inability to do this to satisfaction, or even to the Capacity of our Hearers, which is the true Reason why we do thus continually, and even shamefully, neglect what we assure them is absolutely necessary to be *believed*, and therefore to be understood, that *they may be saved.*

*Liberty of
Proph. p.
54.*

It may deserve to be considered farther, that some of our best Divines and greatest Scholars, have either expressly, or by just Consequence, declared against, and urged Arguments to confute the Necessity of believing this Creed, as the Reverend Bishop Taylor, whose Words are these: ‘ If it
‘ were considered concerning the *Athanasian Creed*, how many People understand
‘ it not; how contrary to natural Reason
‘ it seems; how little the *Scripture* saith
‘ of these Curiosities of Explication; and
‘ how Tradition was not clear on his Side
‘ for the *Article* itself, much less for these
‘ Forms and Minutes——it had not been
‘ amiss, if the final Judgment had been
‘ left to *Jesus Christ.*’ And this was
virtually and by just Consequence declared for many Centuries by the whole *Church of Christ.* For a late *Author* hath
prov’d,

prov'd by many pregnant Testimonies,
 (1st) That the *Apostles* of our Lord delivered that which we call the *Apostles Creed*, or something like it, to all *Christian Churches*; and that all *Christians* received it as their Rule of Faith, as being thus delivered to them. 2^{dly}, That all *Christians* were received into the *Church* by Baptism, on the Profession of this Faith, and to the participation of the *Eucharist*, upon the like Profession. 3^{dly}, That the *Fathers* of the *Church* have always owned this and the *Nicene Creed*, as perfect Digests of all the Articles of the *Christian Faith*. 4^{thly}, That these *Symbols* have always been own'd as a sufficient Test of *Orthodoxy*. Whence, saith he, it demonstratively follows, both from the nature of the thing, and the Tradition of all these Ages of the *Church*, that in these *Symbols* were contained all that the *Apostles* delivered as simply necessary to be believed by all *Christians*, and all that the whole *Catholic Church* judged needful to be held in point of Faith. (2^{dly}) Hence He infers, that these *Creds* must be a perfect Digest of all that is necessary to be believed now, and throughout all succeeding Ages of the World For, saith He, how can it be necessary for any *Christian* to have more in his *Cred* than the *Apostles* and the *Christians* of the four first Centuries had? May the
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the *Churches* of other Ages make the narrow Way to Life more narrow than our Lord and his *Apostles* left it? When the *Apostles*, who profess that they revealed *the whole Council of God* to the *Churches*, Acts 20. 27, and kept back nothing that was needful to Salvation, delivered this as the only Rule of Faith, and their Successors handed it down to Posterity as that Rule of Faith, to which nothing could be added; shall after Ages come and say, some other Articles are necessary to be believed, and damn all those who do not yield Assent unto them? What Reason can be given why any Person may not be saved now by the same Faith which was sufficient for Salvation in the Days of the *Apostles* and the first *Three Centuries*? Are we wiser or more faithful than they? Is there another Covenant made with the *Church* since their Days? Are other Terms of Salvation since made? Or is God less merciful to us than He was to them?

Add to this, that some have refused to receive *Holy Orders*, because they could not subscribe this Creed, as Mr *Dodwell*. Others would not subscribe it, as Mr *Chillingworth*. Others have heartily wished it were expunged our *Liturgy*, as the excellent Archbishop *Tillotson*. And many, who since our happy Restoration have adventured to give us the Sense of it, have interpreted

terpreted it away, or carried it off from the plain Sense and Meaning of the Words: And lastly, that a Convention of Bishops and other learned Divines, *than which this Church was never at any time blessed with better since it was a Church*, being commissioned under the Great Seal of England in the Year 1689, to review, enlarge, and correct our Liturgy, unanimously agreed, that the use of the Creed, commonly called the Creed of St Athanasius, should no longer be imposed.

4thly, Consider, that if you will believe the Doctrine of the *Holy Trinity* not barely as you find it in the *Holy Scripture*, but as Dr. Reeve and Dr Wells have taught you to do, from the Interpretations of the *Primitive Fathers*; consider first, That the Author of the *Remarks upon Dr Clarke*, owns that the *Post-Nicene Fathers* are no more to be considered in this Dispute, than *Modern Authors*; and that from the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*; we have no Commentaries on the *Holy Scriptures*, save only from the blasphemous *Hypotypeses* of *Clemens Alexandrinus* and the Grand Fountain of Heresy, *Origen*: And by consulting other Writers of those Times, you will be got into a dark and endless Labyrinth, out of which you will never be able to extricate your self; and in which, if you may credit either the *Ancient Fathers*, *Eusebius*, *St. Basil*,
 DC Hierony-

Hieronymus, Ruffinus, Photius, or the most able Judges of this Age, *Huetius, Cotelarius, Petavius*, and *Dr Cave*, Men as able to pass a right Judgment of this Controversie, as any others; you will find strong Inducements to deviate from the *Orthodox* and sound Faith, as they tell us, too many of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* did.

Moreover you will easily perceive a grand Illusion in this Case. For though they advise you to interpret the *Scriptures* according to the Sense put upon them by the *Primitive Fathers*, the Meaning of these Men is not so: For, if they know any thing of this Matter, and do not talk at random, or upon Presumption of what other Men have confidently said, they must know the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* have either given us no Sense at all of the *Scriptures* controverted, or none to Their Minds: Whence some bold *Sophister* hath attempted to prove, that *their Interpretations are more favourable to the Sentiments of Dr Clarke, than to the Doctrine of the Orthodox*. Their Meaning therefore is, and can be only this, that we are not to judge of the true Sense of *Scripture* from the Sayings of *Christ* and his *inspired Apostles*, but we must accommodate the Words of *Scripture* to what the *Primitive Fathers* have declared or delivered touch-
ing

ing this Doctrine. Now seeing it is not from the meer Words, but the true Sense of them, that we derive our Rule of Faith ; and the Sense of the Law, is the Law ; the plain Import of this Assertion, in other Words is this ; That Christ is not to be owned as our Lawgiver or Guide in Matters of Faith, because He hath not sufficiently given us the Sense of what He taught ; but the *Fathers* are so, because from them alone we do plainly receive the Sense of them ; And that the *Holy Scripture* is not our Rule of Faith, but the *Fathers*, because they only give us the true Sense of *Scripture*, and without recourse to them, we could not have it ; to omit many more gross Absurdities to which this *Popish* Doctrine is obnoxious. Again ; How must I judge of the Sense of the *Fathers* in this Case ? Must I receive the Sense of the *Scriptures* from the *Fathers* ; and the Sense of the *Fathers*, which is as much controverted as that of *Scripture*, from the Judgment of others, and not be allowed to see with my own Eyes, and to use my own Reason to judge what is the Sense of the *Fathers* ? What is this, but even in necessary Articles of Faith, to see with other Mens Eyes, and to believe without Reason and without Judgment ? But if I must pass a Judgment of the Sense of the *Fathers* by my own

D 2 Reason,

Reason, this is that monstrous Absurdity (it seems) of judging of the Sense of the *Fathers*, and consequently of the Sense of *Scripture*, *teste meipso*. And to what purpose should I use other Means, if I must not judge of the Validity of them? *Lastly*, What do these Men mean by the *Interpretations* of the *Primitive Fathers*? Do they mean the Doctrines which the *Fathers* have delivered down to the time of the *Nicene Synod*. 'Tis certain (*1st*) that the Doctrine delivered in the Creed of *Athanasius* is no where to be found in the *Three first Centuries*; and that the *Tradition* so much insisted on by *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Origen*, and *Eusebius Cæsariensis*, is vastly different from it. *2dly*, It is observed of *Novatian*, by *Pamelius*, that *tho' He is very copious in proving Christ to be God, He never attempts to prove this of the Holy Ghost*: And the Observation is as true of all the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, who have asserted the *Divinity of Christ*, *ex professo*, as *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, *Arnobius*, and all the rest of them, (unless perhaps *Tertullian* the *Montanist*, and *Cyprian* his Scholar, may be excepted :) For they have been so reserved and wholly silent in this Case, that the common Observation, *that the Holy Ghost was never called God for the first Three Centuries*, hath not been yet confuted. *St Jerom* complains, that,

that, multi per ignorantiam Scripturam,
many through ignorance of the Scriptures
did, with Lactantius, deny the Substance Epist. ad
of the Holy Ghost. The same St Jerom Avitum.
saith, that Origen asserted that the Holy
Ghost was a Creature. St Basil declares,
that Dionysius Alexandrinus spake Words
very unbecoming of the Holy Ghost: Τῆς Ep. 41. p.
προσκυνεμένης αὐτῷ Θεότητος ἐξορίζων, divesting him 61.
of his Adorable Deity, and numbring him
amongst the servile and created Natures.
Photius informs us, that Pierius dogma- Cod. 119.
tiz'd concerning the Holy Ghost, ἐπισφαλῶς
λίαν καὶ δυσσεβῶς, very deceitfully and wickedly,
and that Theognostus doubted about the Holy Cod. 105.
Spirit, as Origen had done; who in his first Cod. 8.
Book of Principles declared, that the Son was
made by the Father; and the Holy Ghost by the
Son. And St Basil doth not only confess that
they who asserted the Divinity of the Ho-
ly Ghost were condemned, ὡς καινοτομοῦντας Ep. 73.
περὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ἁγίου, as introducing new Doc-
trines concerning the Holy Ghost; but owns
that this was ζήτημα σωπηδέν τοῖς παλαιοῖς. 2 Ep. 387.
Question passed over in silence by the Anti- P. 381.
ents, and is to be determined, ἀκολούθως τῇ τῆς
γραφῆς ἐννοίᾳ, not from the Fathers, who
left it undiscuss'd, because no Adversa-
ry to it then appeared; but agreeably to
the Sentence of the Holy Scriptures. And
3dly, Of the Communication of the same
individual Essence of the Father to the
Son

Son and Holy Ghost; of the *internal Generation* and *Spiration* of the Son and Holy Ghost; of the *Personality* of the Son and Holy Ghost, in the proper Sense ascribed now to the Word *Person*, if indeed there be any such agreed on; believe me, you will find little, very little in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. And is it not much better to take things as you find them, than to make a tedious Search after that which, I fear, you will never find?

Lastly, Consider seriously the great and constant Trouble you may bring upon your self, should this your narrow Search pervert you, as 'tis said it hath done Mr *Whiston* and Dr *Clarke*, Men of unquestionable Sincerity in their Endeavours to find out the Truth; And how happy was it for *old Orthodoxy*, that the Heads of our Church rose up against them, and condemned them κεφαλαιῶδες, *summarily*, after the *Roman* manner, though not after the *Roman Law*, that *no Man should be condemned before he be heard*? In a Word, all Innovations, even in Civil Things, do usually create some Trouble to the Authors of them. All Changes in the Affairs of Nations, reflect an Odium upon the first Contrivers of them. But nothing doth so much exasperate as Alterations in Religion; especially if they concern such Articles

cles as have been long received, and own'd
 as necessary to be believed. In this Case,
 be the Reasons offer'd for them never so
 plain, and the Necessity of them never so
 great, which was the Case in the first Re-
 formation from the *Superstitions* and *Idola-
 trous Worship* of the *Church of Rome* here,
 and elsewhere: Yet he had need of the
Zeal of Zuinglius, the Pen of *Calvin*, the
 Courage and the Constancy of *Luther*,
 who can bear up against the Clamours of
 the *warm Divines*, and stem the Tide against
 that Stream of Opposition, which will run
 high and fierce against him; and will only
 do this by *Luther's* Method, of which
Melancthon speaketh thus: Cum in Scrip-
 turæ cognitione magis indies, magisque
 proficeret, suamque doctrinam cum verbo
 Dei congruere judicaret, omnem Adversa-
 riorum impetum, & totius orbis odium,
 fortissimo pectore sustinuit, & tanquam
 murus Aeneus constitit immotus, con-
 tempto omni periculo; *Encreasing daily
 more and more in the Knowledge of the
 Scriptures, and judging his Doctrine to
 be agreeable to the Word of God, He
 sustained, with great strength of Mind,
 all the Force of his Adversaries, and the
 Hatred of the whole World, and stood as
 immoveable as a brazen Wall, contemning
 all Dangers.*

Apud Hor-
 ting. Hist.
 Eccl. 1, &c.
 16 part 2d.
 p. 736, 737:

Upon

Upon all these Accounts, my Advice is in the General, not to go far in the Explication of that which, saith a learned Prelate, is *certainly very far beyond all our Apprehensions, and ought therefore to be let alone.* And in particular,

1st. Let me advise you not nicely and curiously to enquire into the proper import of the Word *Person*; the greatest Men, even Bishop *Stillfleet*, seem to have failed in that Attempt. Satisfy yourself therefore with that which Mr *Emlyn* quotes from the great Mr *Lesley*, *That the Word Person, when applied to God, is used in a Sense infinitely different from what it means, when used of Men; or with that of Dr Wallis, that there be Three Somewhats, which are but one God; and these Somewhats we commonly call Persons.*

Letter 1. p. 9. *This I take only to signifie, that the true Notion, and the true Name of that Distinction, is unknown to us.* Here you may rest securely, without fear of being baffled: For who can confute he knows not what. Vain therefore is that Question of Dr *Clarke's*; *Of what use are Words when they have no Signification?* Surely they are unanswerable, as He himself confesses, by saying, *This I cannot answer, because I do not understand it.*

1. *boldly*, Do not trouble your self with framing Answers to all the seeming Absurdities and Semblances of Contradiction the subtil *Hereticks* object against this *fundamental Article*: But if you like not Mr *Lesley's* Answer, that *That may be a Contradiction in one Nature, which is not so in another*; say with Dr *Sherlock*, In Matters of pure Revelation which we have no natural Ideas of, and know nothing of them but what is revealed, it is impossible to know what is a Contradiction to the Nature of Things whose Natures we do not understand. Learn of Mr *Bayle* to captivate your Reason to the Obedience of Faith. For in his *Critical Dictionary* He propounds the Objections of the *Manichees* against the Goodness and the Wisdom of God, and declares they are unanswerable upon the Principles of Reason, but are effectually baffled by *captivating the Understanding to the Obedience of Faith*; and faith, ' We may as well believe God to
 ' be this Holy, Good, Wise, and Power-
 ' ful Being; though all the Appearances
 ' in Nature evidently shew there can be no
 ' such Being, as we believe the Doctrine of
 ' Three Divine Persons, each of which by
 ' himself distinctly considered, is perfect God,
 ' without being able to reconcile it to our
 ' Notion of the Unity of God. Here again you will be impregnable; for He that

goes about to confute That against which He must not reason, is a Fool.

3dly. Look upon this, as the generality of *Christians* do, as a Great Mystery, rather to be adored than curiously enquired into. For the ingenious Dr *South* hath plainly told you, that *his Faith with relation to Jesus Christ is such, that were it not to be adored as a Mystery, it would be exploded as a Contradiction.* And, saith the Reverend Dr *Sherlock*, *That is an impudent Argument, which brings Revelation down in such sublime Mysteries, to the Level of his Understanding.* Now here again you are safe; for He that argues against that which He understands not, must argue against He knows not what.

4thly, Trouble not your Head to invent new Answers to those Texts of Scripture which the *Hereticks* object against the *Orthodox* Doctrine of the *Trinity*; but rest in the Answers which are commonly given to them, after the Example of the great Dr *Sherlock*, who to the Objection from those Words, *Mark 13, 32, Of that Day and Hour knoweth none, not the Angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only,* answers with *Athanasius*, *Gregory Nazianzen*, and many other *Fathers*, that He knew it not as Man, though as God He must be supposed to know it; and adds, *This must be the true Answer, or I know*

now not how we shall find a better; and yet confesses it is very hard that the Son, who is but One Person, though He hath Two Natures, should be said not to know that, which He did know, whether He knew it as God or Man.

5thly. If you will be interpreting Scriptures by your own fallible *Private Judgment*, and own, with the generality of *Protestants*, that it is clear in all things necessary to be believed; own it in *Words* only: But say with Dr *Reeve* and Dr *Wells*, that *the most rational and safest Way to understand the Holy Scriptures, is to consult the general Sense of the Catholick Writers in the purest Ages of the Church.* It seems our Blessed Lord, the *Holy Spirit of Truth*, and the *inspired Pen-men* (though without doubt the End of their Preaching and Writing was that they might be understood, and 'tis a Blemish in any Person, to write otherwise) have not delivered their Minds so clearly, no not in the Essentials of *Christianity* (without the Knowledge of which all our Knowledge will not avail unto Salvation,) that we can rationally hope sufficiently to understand them, or be safe in our perusal of their Sayings, without recourse unto these *Primitive Writers*. And here you never will be at a Non-plus; but, among so many voluminous Writers, will always find something to alledge in

confirmation of your Sentiments, whether they be true or false; as is evident from the late Writings of the excellent Bishop Bull for the *Orthodox Doctrine*, and the numerous Collections of Mr *Whiston* and Dr *Clarke* against it.

But if you will neither be discouraged from searching deeper into this profound *Mystery* by the Example of these Two great Men, who have writ so unwarily and erroneously, as to deserve the Condemnation of that Great and Wise Body of the *Convocation*, and yet so plausibly as to gain too many *Proselytes*; nor be dissuaded from searching into things which are above your Strength, and are too hard for you; I hope my last Attempt will be sufficient to restrain your Curiosity in this Affair; for when you find the true State of the Question laid before you, (which few of those who write upon this Subject fully understand,) perhaps the difficulty of the Task may check your proneness to enter further into this dangerous Dispute,

Know therefore 1st, That *all Christians* always owned a *Trinity*; is evident from the Form of Baptism used throughout all Ages.

2^{dly}, That Dr *Clarke* never denied the
 Reply, p. Son to be *really and truly* God, by deriving
 52. *real and true Divinity from the ineffable*
Power

Power and Will of him who alone has an unoriginated Being and Godhead; and, saith He, God forbid that I should ever argue for excluding him from being God, in any other Sense than as it signifies him who hath derived his Being from no Cause. Now either a true real Godhead may be derived, or it may not: If it may, then Christ may be truly and really God, as Dr Clarke saith He is; or if it may not, why is it by all who own him to have such an Essence, said that He derived that Essence from the Father? The Question therefore here to be disputed, can be only this.

1st. Whether the Son derives his Being from the Father by the Communication of the individual Essence of the Father to him, or, as Dr Clarke saith, from the ineffable Power and Will of the Father.

2dly. Whether the Son be generated, and the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father by an internal Generation and Spiration; or be so generated, and do so proceed, as to be extra essentiam patris. And

3dly. Seeing we own Three Persons, and One God, the third Question is, what the Word Person, when applied to God doth import, whether a Mode or Relation, as our Systematical Divines do usually teach; or whether Dr Clarke truly asserts that nothing can be a distinct intelligent Person, which

which hath not a distinct intelligent Existence.

If according to the *6th Article* of the Church of *England*, you admit of nothing as a necessary *Article of Christian Faith* which cannot be proved from *Holy Scripture*, you must be obliged to shew where the *Scripture* doth plainly, and without Ambiguity assert these Three Particulars.

If you say that these things cannot be clearly proved from *Scripture*, without recourse to the concurrent Suffrage of the *Fathers* delivering the *Tradition of the Church* concerning them; then (1st) you deny the Truth of that *Article*: For what can be only proved this way, is not proved from *Scripture*, but from the Testimony of the *Fathers*. (2^{dly}) This way of proving these Three Propositions cannot be certain, unless it be certain that the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* have clearly and constantly asserted these three Propositions, and also that their concurrent Sense in the Interpretation of any Text of *Scripture*, affords a certain Evidence that this is the true Sense of that *Scripture*. Both which, you will find hard to prove.

If 3^{dly}, you undertake to confirm your Sense of these Assertions by rational Deductions from what is contained in, or plainly asserted by the *Holy Scriptures*, you must

must allow that *Reason* is a proper and sufficient Rule by which Judgment may be made of the true Sense of *Scripture* in the most difficult and fundamental Points, how *mysterious* soever, and how much soever *above Reason* they may seem to be; and must allow others to use the same Freedom of alledging their Reasons against that Sense of *Scripture* you embrace.

Then an Answer must be given to Mr *Clendon's* Book concerning the import of the Word *Person*, either by defending some of the Notions of the Word *Person* and *Personality*, which He there endeavours to confute, and clearing them from those Exceptions which He hath made against them; or by some new Exposition of those Terms, which hath not yet been thought on; and then that will be liable to this Objection, that this is a new Notion of *Person* and *Personality*, unknown to any of the *Ancient Fathers*, or to the Divines which formerly have writ upon that Subject.

An Answer must also be given to Dr *Clarke's* and Mr *Emlyn's* Arguments, by which they endeavour to prove that *the Communication of the same individual Essence of the Father to the Son, and Holy Ghost, is a thing impossible, and implies a* Reply p. 38.
Contradiction. For how, saith He, 'can the same individual Being be Subordinate to
 ' it

p. 229,
230.

Remarks
on Mr Lef-
ley, p. Dial.
p. 6.

‘ it self? And again; Self-existence is
‘ not an external, and relative Character,
‘ as Paternity is, but ’tis an intrinsic,
‘ absolute, and of all others the most essen-
‘ tial Quality of the Subject to which it
‘ belongs. If therefore the Character of
‘ Self-existence cannot be communicated, it
‘ follows necessarily, that neither can the
‘ Nature of the Self-existent Being (proper-
‘ ly and strictly speaking) be communicated;
‘ Self-existence being the principal Constitu-
‘ ent of that Nature, or that which makes
‘ it to be that Nature which it is. The
‘ Reason why the individual Power or Know-
‘ ledge of God the Father cannot be com-
‘ municated any more than his individual
‘ Existence, is because they are individual,
‘ and nothing that is individual can be com-
‘ municated from one thing to another. Mr.
‘ Emlyn adds, that if both Father and Son
‘ have the same individual Divine Nature,
‘ it must be hard to show how the Divine
‘ Nature of the Son can be incarnate, and
‘ not the Divine Nature of the Father;
‘ or how the Divine Nature of the Fa-
‘ ther can be incarnate, unless his Person
‘ be so to.

You will find them farther enquiring,
whether the Divine Nature of the Father
be communicated to something existent, as
το ὑποκειμενον, the Recipient, or to nothing
existent? If to nothing, with what pro-
priety

priety of Speech can that be called a *Communion*, or how can it be styled a Communion of the Essence of the *Father* to the Son, He not existing? If to something existent, the Son must be existent in order to this Communication; whereas *Dr Cave* tells us from the Fathers, that this Communication of the Essence of the Father, is the Generation of the Son, and so can only properly be said to be the Communication of the Essence of the Son, not the Communication of the Essence of the *Father*, to the Son.

Also you must answer the Arguments by which *Dr Clarke* doth attempt to prove, that *one Being, and one Person, in intelligent Agents, are Words of the same import.* This must be false; since otherwise a *Person* cannot signify a *Mode of Substance* but a *real Being*, and Three Persons must have Three real Essences or Beings; and yet He is very sure, that *one Being, when spo-* p. 101
ken of an intelligent Agent, is the very same as one Person; neither is there in Nature any other Notion of Person, than as it signifies an intelligent Agent or intelligent Being. Whenever the Word is used otherwise, no Man can tell what it signifies; this, saith He, 'is the common, natural Notion all p. 158.
' Mankind have of the Word Person. Will ' then your Friend tell us what a Person in ' his Sense is, and what the Scripture means

p. 229,
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' Mankind have of the Word Person. Will ' then your Friend tell us what a Person in ' his Sense is, and what the Scripture means

‘ means when it continually represents the
 ‘ Son as an intelligent Agent? Will He tell
 ‘ us what such a Person is, who is no Be-
 ‘ ing? Or how Modes of Subsistence can be
 ‘ intelligent Agents, without having so
 ‘ much as any real Existence at all, or of
 ‘ what benefit it can be to make use of
 ‘ Words which have no Signification?

As for the *internal Generation* of the Son,
 and *Spiration* of the Holy Ghost, tho’ this
 be not easy to be understood, nor much
 spoken of in the *Scripture*, or in the *Pri-*
mitive Fathers, yet it is necessary to be
 asserted, that you may maintain the *Ortho-*
dox Faith. For if this *Generation* or *Sp-*
iration shou’d give the Son or Holy Ghost,
 an Essence *extra essentiam Patris*, this
 would seem to introduce *Tritheism*; for then
 the Son and Holy Ghost must have Divine
 Essences *extra essentiam Patris*, and yet the
 Essence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
 being the same individual Essence in *Ortho-*
doxy, the same individual Essence must
 be *extra seipsam*. Let not then the *Here-*
ticks embarrass you with these Enquiries,
How the Essence of the Son and Holy Ghost
 can be in the Father, if Three Persons be
 not also in him; or how Three Persons
 can be in him, unless he be Father,
 Son, and Holy Ghost: Nor let them
 laugh you out of the Word *ἑμπεριχενος*,
 so fully expressive of this *Mystery*, but stick
 to

to the *Form of sound Words* consecrated by the usage of *Holy Church*.

To put an End to this Discourse. If after devout Prayer for the Divine Direction ; if after a probity of Mind and an impartialness in your Search for Truth ; and after your best, and most sincere Endeavours to find out the Truth ; you should Mistake, either thro' the Difficulty of the Subject, or thro' unwilling Ignorance ; would you not judge it great Hardship and Severity, that you should be branded as an Heretick ; be condemned, harassed, ruined, and sentenced to Damnation, for an Error which it was not in your Power to help, or for following sincerely the Dictates of that Reason, which is the only Faculty which God hath given you, whereby to judge of Truth and Falshood, or of the Sense of his revealed Words ? For

1st, May you not be sufficiently certain in your self, that you are not *ἐνοχοποιεῖσθαι* condemned by your own Conscience, for believing and asserting what your best Reason, after a diligent and upright Search, and the due use of the forementioned Means, doth conceive to be the Truth ? And hath not *St Paul* expressly taught us, that he who truly is an *Heretick*, is thus condemned in Himself ? And would you not be an *Heretick* in his Sense, should you be-

lieve contrary to the Dictates of your own Mind and Conscience? May you not be inwardly assured that you have not been acted in this Search by any Carnal Motives, or sinister Designs, but purely from a sincere desire to find out the Truth? And may you not be hence assured that you are not an *Heretick* in the *Scripture* Sense, seeing that reckons *Heresies* amongst the Works of the Flesh which *are manifest*? Doth not *St John* assure us, that *if our Hearts do not condemn us, then have we confidence with God (viz.) that He will not condemn us*? And is not this as true in reference to what is necessary to be *believed*, as well as to be *done*, in order to Salvation? And may we not then say with the *Apostle*, *it is a light thing with me to be judged (or condemned) of Men*, when I am sure I shall not be condemned by my righteous Judge? To this Effect are these judicious Sayings of *Bishop Taylor*. ‘If we remember
 ‘ that *St Paul* reckons Heresy among the
 ‘ Works of the Flesh, and ranks it with all
 ‘ manner of *practical* Impieties; we shall
 ‘ easily perceive, that if a Man mingles
 ‘ not a *vice* with his Opinion, if He be
 ‘ innocent in his Life, tho’ deceived in
 ‘ his Doctrine; his Error is his Misery,
 ‘ not his Crime——And if any shall say
 ‘ otherwise, it is to say that some Men
 ‘ shall be damned, when they cannot help
 ‘ it; and be miserable for ever, because
 of

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‘ of their unhappiness to be deceived thro’
 ‘ their own Simplicity, and natural, or
 ‘ accidental, but *inculpable Infirmity*.

2dly. This suggests a further Plea for
 Charity in our Opinion of and Tender-
 ness in our Dealings with those Men who
 thus *unwillingly* do err ; arising from the
 Judgment of our best Divines concerning vol. 4. c.
Sins of Ignorance. For (1st) Archbishop 4. p. 446.
Tillotson assures us, that ‘ God measures
 ‘ the Faults of Men by their Wills ; and
 ‘ if there be no Fault there, there can be
 ‘ *no Guilt* : For no Man is guilty, but He
 ‘ that is conscious to himself that He would
 ‘ not do (or believe,) what He knew He
 ‘ ought to do (and believe,) or would do
 ‘ (and believe) what He knew He ought
 ‘ not to do, (or believe.) Now if a Man be
 ‘ simply, and invincibly ignorant of his
 ‘ Duty, his neglect of it is altogether in-
 ‘ voluntary : For the Will hath nothing
 ‘ to do, where the Understanding doth *not*
 ‘ *direct*. Mr *Kettlewel* is very copious on B. 4. c. 4.
 ‘ this Subject ; for, saith He, ‘ God will p. 446.
 ‘ impute nothing to us at the last Day, ei-
 ‘ ther to save or destroy us, but what pro-
 ‘ ceeded from our own Will and Choice ;
 ‘ and therefore if any sinful Action be in-
 ‘ *nocently involuntary*, it is likewise *uncon-*
 ‘ *demning*. To convince us of this Truth,
 saith He, ‘ it is considerable that all p. 484.
 ‘ these *involuntary Failings*, upon *Ignorance*
 ‘ or want of *Knowledge*, are *unavoidable* ;
 and

' and God, we know, will never damn any
 ' Man for doing that which could not be a-
 ' voided. For no Man can chuse to shun that
 ' which He could not see: but his Understand-
 ' ing must first discern and apprehend a
 B. 4. ch 7. ' thing, before his Will is in any Capacity
 P. 542. ' to refuse it. Whence He concludes, that
 ' where our Ignorance of any of Christ's
 ' Laws is joined with an honest Heart, and
 ' remains after our sincere Industry to know
 ' the Truth, we may take Comfort to our
 ' selves, and be confident that it is *involun-*
 ' *tary and innocent.*' In his 4th Book and
 2d Chapter, He lays down this Propositi-
 on, *That only our voluntary and chosen Acti-*
ons are under the Restraint of Laws, and
either enjoyn'd or prohibited, punished or re-
warded by them. This he proves, *first,*
 ' from the Nature of every Law, which
 ' is to be a Bond and Obligation to us in
 ' such Actions, to which otherwise our
 ' Will is free and able either to chuse, or
 ' refuse them. Now Laws are intended for a
 ' restraint upon us only in our *voluntary*
 ' and *chosen* Actions; for there are none
 ' else in which we are free. (2) From
 ' the Nature of the Obligation of a Law;
 ' for all its Obligation is only upon its
 ' *chosen* Actions. For all the Force which
 ' it can possibly have upon us, to bind us
 ' to the Performance of any thing, is only
 ' so far as it can make us will and chuse
 ' it; and therefore as for all *unchosen* Ac-
 tions

' tions, they are not under the reach of
 ' the Law, because they are not sub-
 ' ject to the Force of Obligation. *3dly.*
 ' From the Nature of Rewards and Pu-
 ' nishments ; for these can take place only
 ' on those Actions which we can chuse,
 ' and are at liberty to exert, or omit :
 ' For no Actions can be imputed to a Man
 ' either for or against him ; farther than
 ' they depended on him, because there is
 ' no Thanks at all due to him for doing
 ' that which He could not avoid, nor
 ' any Charge at all capable to be brought
 ' against him for failing to do what
 ' He could not do. These, and all o-
 ' ther things of like Nature, which
 ' He could not help, may be his *Mis-*
 ' *fortune*, but not his *Fault*, and what-
 ' soever He suffers on the account of
 ' them, may be, and often is, his *Ca'amity*,
 ' but by no means his *Punishment*. *Barba-*
 ' *rous Cruelty* indeed he may fall under,
 ' but *legal and just Penalties* he never can.
 ' This He proves *lastly*, ' from the effect of
 ' every sinful, and punishable Action,
 ' which, saith He, must be such for which
 ' our own Conscience will blame and
 ' condemn us, and which we shall lament
 ' in Repentance and Remorse ; But now it
 ' is a great Absurdity, for a Man to be
 ' angry with himself, for that which He
 ' could never help ; or to repent that ever
 ' He did that which it was not in his pow-

‘er to hinder? Now it is certain that no Man can believe or assent to any Doctrine as true, without Evidence; or dissent from it, when He hath and perceives that Evidence; and that no Perswasions or human Laws, can engage a Man to believe *without* Conviction, and much less *against* it. Nor can any Man repent that He believes what He judgeth to be true; and therefore by these Rules, He is liable to no just Punishments upon that Account.

A 3^d Consideration which should engage our Charity to Men of Probity of Mind, who after the best Search which they could make after Truth, *unwillingly* do err; ariseth from the Consideration of the Goodness and the Justice of that God, whom we stand bound to imitate in these Perfections; For, as *Bishop Taylor* argues, ‘ 1st, ‘ it cannot consist with the Goodness of ‘ God, who doth so know our Infirmities, ‘ as that He pardons many things in ‘ which our Wills, indeed have the least ‘ share, (tho’ some they have) but are ‘ overborn with an impetuous Violence; ‘ I say, it is inconsistent with his Goodness to condemn those that err, whose ‘ Error hath nothing of the Will in it; ‘ who therefore cannot repent of their ‘ Error, because they do believe they hold ‘ the Truth. And if this Man perish in ‘ his Opinion against the Commands and ‘ Censures of his Superiours, this is no

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